

Liquid fuelled stove refuelling

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Issue

A young person was badly burnt following a refuelling accident. The stove wasn't out. The cause of the accident was acknowledged as a 'supervision error'. However, the provider concerned was prosecuted for not having a suitable and sufficient risk assessment.

Outcome

There is a concern that this could have a detrimental effect on safety if other providers fail to note the real issue (the supervision) and concentrate on detailed operating instructions for individual stove types. HSE do not expect providers to produce operating procedures for every piece of equipment in their stores.

Do not confuse a failure to follow agreed procedures with a failure to have appropriate procedures. This incident spawned a number of solutions to the problem. Three are worthy of note:

- One solution is 'take the burner to the fuel, not the fuel to the burner'. That way if the burner is cool enough to pick up it won't still be alight;
- Carry a second burner. When one runs out fill and use the other one. That way, again, you only ever fill a cold burner;
- There is a 'safety' fuel bottle but it is not a complete solution. In particular, it will not prevent a flare-up but it will prevent a full-bottle fire. It may not be immediately clear when the bottle is locked in the closed position. Any pressure on the plunger in the 'unlocked' position (as for instance whilst being carried in a rucksack) can result in a rucksack full of leaked fuel, and an even greater fire risk.